

Council on Postsecondary Education
July 10, 2006

P-16 Council Update

At its June 21 meeting, the P-16 Council reviewed the progress its partner agencies have made regarding the council's priority issues: (a) preparing more students for college and work, (b) developing research-based policies for high school-college dual enrollment, (c) providing an adequate supply of qualified teachers and school leaders, (d) creating an integrated P-16 data system, and (e) ensuring that students have affordable access to quality education through college.

Education Cabinet Secretary Virginia Fox began the meeting by noting that the proposal to develop a cross-sector, cross-agency data system was not funded in the last budget session. She strongly suggested that the partner agencies of the P-16 Council continue working together to eliminate policy and logistical barriers and build a P-16 data system on which to base sound education policies and accountability measures to improve student learning.

Council members heard a report on the local P-16 councils from Dale Duvall, associate dean of university and community partnerships at Morehead State University. Dr. Duvall identified several projects, including dual credit programs, summer preparation programs, and teacher professional development initiatives, which MoSU has fostered throughout its service area. He noted that only the Appalachian Regional P-16+ Council and a few other local councils enjoy the benefit of paid staff dedicated to administering local council business. This support is critical to the success of these councils. The proposal to provide infrastructure for all local councils was not funded in the current budget. It remains a priority.

Several agenda items highlighted Kentucky's participation in regional and national projects to increase college and workplace readiness. Agency staff reviewed the ways in which Kentucky agencies and schools are addressing the Southern Regional Education Board's recommendations to Kentucky as part of the SREB's College and Career Transitions Initiative: namely, (1) improve persistence and completion rates in two- and four-year institutions; (2) improve student preparedness for college and careers; (3) inform students, parents, and teachers about the level of preparation needed for college readiness; (4) establish standards for dual credit/joint enrollment programs; (5) establish employer-recognized industry credentials; and (6) improve high school graduation rates.

Council members also reviewed the advances Kentucky has made as a result of its participation in the American Diploma Project. After completing the first phase of the project, which established benchmarks of college and workplace readiness in English and mathematics, along with sample college and workplace applications, Kentucky became one of what now numbers 22 states participating in the ADP Network. These states have pledged

to align high school standards and assessments with expectations of colleges and employers, to require a challenging and life-preparatory curriculum of all high school students, to streamline the assessment system so that tests in high school can serve as readiness tests for college and work, and to hold both high schools and postsecondary institutions accountable for their students' graduation and success. The P-16 partner agencies, as well as the General Assembly, have responded collaboratively to better align Kentucky's standards, curriculum preparation, and assessments to improve the college readiness and success of students. The passage of Senate Bill 130, which requires the administration of the ACT to all high school students and provides three state-funded WorkKeys assessments on a voluntary basis, will link the ACT-based diagnostic assessments provided by the Kentucky Department of Education with the Council on Postsecondary Education's statewide placement policy. Kentucky is the first and only state with this degree of alignment in its assessment framework.

The KDE has revised its Core Content for Assessment and Program of Study standards and raised its high school graduation requirements to include algebra II and four years of mathematics. It also is working with Achieve, Inc., the organization overseeing the ADP, to develop end-of-course assessments reflecting the ADP benchmarks. The CPE is working with Kentucky's postsecondary institutions to administer standardized college-level student learning assessments and continue participation in student engagement surveys.

Guest presenters Keith Bird, chancellor of the Kentucky Community and Technical College System, and Carolyn Witt Jones, executive director of the Partnership for Successful Schools, spoke of their organizations' efforts to prepare more Kentuckians for life and work.

Dr. Bird summarized the recent ACT, Inc., report, *Ready for College and Ready for Work: Same or Different?*, a comparative analysis of the ACT college entrance assessments in reading and mathematics and the ACT WorkKeys assessment in reading for information and applied mathematics. By examining the skill levels and threshold scores for each, ACT documents that high school graduates need comparable skills and levels of mastery in reading and mathematics to be ready for college-level courses without remediation and to enter the skilled workplace prepared for job-specific training. Dr. Bird highlighted several initiatives in which KCTCS is working with school districts to provide early diagnostic assessment and motivate career awareness. He attested to the high skill levels in reading, writing, and mathematics required by today's job market.

Carolyn Witt Jones reviewed the accomplishments and challenges of the Kentucky State Scholars Program. Kentucky was the seventh of 24 states to participate in the scholars program, a private-public partnership that encourages middle and high school students to take a rigorous curriculum to prepare them for college and skilled employment.

Ms. Jones reported that the business leaders with whom she works have gladly participated in classroom presentations to connect academic preparation with career preparation. One of the continuing challenges is the competing incentive of the Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship program, which makes awards based on grade point average. Parents are particularly concerned that their children will earn reduced awards if they take harder courses

and receive lower grades. Students, teachers, and guidance counselors are further confused by numerous curricular choices. Folding the KEES curriculum and pre-college curriculum into the Kentucky State Scholars Program curriculum would provide a consistent message linking rigor and college and skilled workplace readiness for high school students and their advisors.

Agency staff reviewed the 2002 High School Feedback Report and its user guide, which are now available on the CPE Web site at: <http://apps.cpe.ky.gov/hsfb2002/index.htm> and linked to the KDE's Web site. After working with KDE staff and superintendents, clearer descriptions and interpretations of the content and support materials to explain the tables were added to increase the use of the report in school and district planning. Results for the 2004 class of high school graduates through fall 2006 will be posted later this year.

KDE staff reported on the first meeting of the KDE Dual Credit Task Force. A study conducted by the CPE staff of dually enrolled Kentucky high school students did not show a strong correlation between college course-taking on the part of high school students and their subsequent postsecondary matriculation. A survey administered by the CPE staff to Kentucky's postsecondary institutions revealed strong interest in more consistent policies regarding dual enrollment and dual credit. The effect of dual enrollment and dual credit on strengthening high school achievement and graduation remains open and an issue of considerable interest across both the P-12 and postsecondary sectors. The KDE task force will address many of the financial and programmatic policy issues involved in dual enrollment and dual credit opportunities.

Dual enrollment received heightened national attention recently with the creation of a new federal need-based Pell grant program. Kentucky high school students who are eligible for need-based Pell grants will be eligible for the new federal Academic Competitiveness (AC) grants if they receive a Commonwealth Diploma, complete the Kentucky State Scholars Program, complete the pre-college curriculum, or receive a score of three or higher on two advanced placement tests or four or higher on the International Baccalaureate assessment. Initially, high school students who dually enrolled in a college course were considered ineligible for these AC grants because they were viewed as having previously enrolled in an undergraduate program. The U.S. Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings, has since notified states that students who have dually enrolled in college courses without formally matriculating into an undergraduate program will be eligible for AC grants. Pell-eligible students entering their third or fourth year of college will be eligible to participate in the National Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent (SMART) grant program to receive up to \$4,000 in financial aid if they declare majors in mathematics, the sciences, or critical foreign languages.

P-16 Council members noted throughout the above agenda items that increasing the rigor of the K-12 curriculum, particularly in the shortage areas of mathematics, the sciences, and foreign languages, will demand a steep increase in the supply of teachers capable of teaching in these fields. The postsecondary sectors helped to define the standards that the

K-12 system is beginning to meet. Postsecondary institutions will now need to assume responsibility for supplying the teachers and school leaders that this more rigorous curriculum entails.

Several staff reviewed the state education leadership design initiatives, including the KDE's State Action for Educational Leadership Project (SAELP), the Education Professional Standards Board's on-going redesign of principal preparation and career development for classroom teachers, and the CPE's on-going conversations with the institutions regarding a collaborative doctorate in educational leadership.

Finally, several partnership agency staff members reviewed the financial aid issues identified by the KEES policy work group. Legislation proposed by the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority to raise the ACT threshold for KEES supplemental awards, to eliminate the age-cap for receiving these awards, and to provide financial aid for adult part-time students did not pass in the last legislative session. Council members discussed whether the KEES award structure was fulfilling its original purposes to increase college enrollment of Kentucky students, attract the most talented Kentucky high school graduates to Kentucky postsecondary institutions, and raise the level of academic achievement of Kentucky high school students. They also discussed whether the current balance of need-based and merit-based student financial aid best serves the interests of access and affordability. They considered how the P-16 partner agencies might develop a better and more comprehensively coordinated set of policies regarding financial aid, tuition, and state appropriation in the Commonwealth.

CPE member Mark Wattier was elected chair of the P-16 Council through June 2007. The KDE will staff the 2006-07 meetings.